

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 11, 2005

To: Greg Carpenter

From: Mercedes McLemore

Subject: Minutes from February 9, 2005 Los Cerritos Wetlands Meeting

Meeting Notes:

Roll Call:

Attendees

City of Long Beach:

Greg Carpenter, Planning Bureau Manager

Mercedes McLemore, Planner

Review of Minutes from last meeting

Minutes Approved from January 12, 2005

Meeting Open for Public Comments—None

Meeting Open for Staff Comments

- Website is available; http://www.longbeach.gov/plan/pb/cpd/los_cerritos.asp
- Reminder of General Plan Update Land Use & Mobility Elements Public Workshop, February 26, 2005 8:30 a.m.- noon
- Future Guest Speakers
 - Local Coastal Commission Representative
 - Angela Reynolds, Community and Environmental Planning Officer

Speaker Presentation:

Mary Small, California State Coastal Conservancy (i.e. "Conservancy")

Ric Trent gave a brief introduction of the guest speaker, introducing the group and explaining our purpose to her. Ms. Small explained her position with the Coastal Conservancy, stating that she acts as a conduit to get funding and enhance our efforts to acquire the wetlands. Her duties also include working on the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, and developing strategies to determine "priority lands" from Santa Barbara to San Diego. Ms. Small stated that the Los Cerritos Wetlands are considered priority. She took the project over about six months ago from Chris Chaplain, who originally handled the project site. Her office is in Oakland where the Conservancy is based, but most of her work is done in Southern California, including the Ballona Wetlands.

Ms. Small opened the presentation up by offering a background of the project site. There are three current landowners targeted for the land acquisition, Bixby, Bryant, and Hellman (in Seal Beach). The Conservancy is currently not in any negotiations for acquiring the Bixby property. Ms. Small pointed out the central location of the Bryant

property on a map, and stated that the Conservancy just completed a appraisal to determine how much of this property is developable and assess its value. The Conservancy is still in the negotiation phase, which is the most Ms. Small could disclose because purchasing detail is confidential information.

Ms. Small explained that the Hellman property appraisal is currently being updated. She stated that she was confident a price will be agreed upon and that once cleanup of Hellman has been established, acquisition can go through. Ms. Small explained that the Hellman property has the best chance of acquisition occurring soon. She went on to explain the state funding provided, and how she hoped to get part of the state funds matched to buy the Hellman property. Since there is a deadline to use such funding, Ms. Small said a request for extension may be necessary in order to avoid losing it. There remains the potential for additional funding through other organizations.

Ms. Small stated that there are three big issues that the Conservancy considered for each of the properties. These issues are:

1. What organization will take title of the land?
2. How much cleanup is required, and how much will it cost?
3. Is the appraised value fair and reasonable?

She further explained each of these issues, stating that the level of cleanup required affects their risk assessment, and helps determine the feasibility of each acquisition.

Ms. Small continued on to discuss future development potential for the wetlands. According to her, negotiations have been back and forth for years and no conceptual habitat planning is complete. Mr. Trent asked if this site would be difficult to establish a habitat conservation master plan. Ms. Small stated that this is an already impacted site so master planning is already constrained, and any further development in the area would create additional constraint.

The presentation ended with a question and answer period. Ms. Small was asked what the purpose of saving this land was, considering that so much of the wetlands was lost to development. Janice Dahl explained that what is left of the wetlands is currently used by ocean fishes to spawn and that the remaining land must be saved in order to protect fishes in California, otherwise the species will be impacted. Mr. Trent stated that there are numerous "coastal ghost towns" in existence because prior battles to save habitats were not as sophisticated. He believes that preservationist have the advantage of learning from past mistakes.

Another question asked how to restore the wetlands. There was not a definite answer to this question, however different examples of restored wetlands were mentioned, including a Seal Beach Navy Weapons Station and Bolsa Chica.

Ms. Small pointed out that the Conservancy worked on Bolsa Chica, and surrounding circumstances in this case will make restoring the land more difficult than the predecessors. Ms. Small was asked if wetlands and oil operations are incompatible. Ms. Small replied that it is conceivable, but opinions vary.

There being no further questions, the meeting was adjourned.

Other Issues

Pam Emerson from the California Coastal Commission will be guest speaker for 3/9/05 meeting.